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**Lindemann Audiotechnik: CD player 825**



When it comes to premium music playback from digital sources, Lindemann Audiotechnik has been an integral player on both the national and the international HiFi scene for many years. My first encounter with these Bavarian products was around ten years ago. At the time Lindemann, as one of the first partners working in cooperation with Sony, launched a Super Audio CD player of the highest quality. I still have a clear recollection of the meeting with Elisabeth Junker from Lindemann, and Yoshihisa Mori from Sony, "Mr. SACD". That was at the beginning of the last decade, when the High End was still being held in the famous Hotel Kempinski Gravenbruch. Elisabeth Junker is the "guiding spirit", so to speak, at Lindemann Audiotechnik. Which is something Norbert Lindemann, head and chief developer of the com-

### CD player 825 from Lindemann Audiotechnik

*by Meik Wippermann*

pany, will readily admit. And it was also Elisabeth Junker whose committed and indefatigable manner already managed to "fire up" the electronics giant Sony back then. And I don't mean that in a negative sense at all. This is because in the early stages of the new high-definition format, the inventors of the Super Audio CD system, Philips and Sony, obviously had no idea which support their small cooperation partners really needed at the time. And so, in retrospect, it is hardly surprising that Lindemann had already produced an SACD unit, the D680, which was ready for series production at a time when its competitors still didn't even know how to spell "Super Audio CD" correctly. The 680, as well as its successors, the 820 and 820S, reaped glowing reviews from the trade press all around the world, very quickly making the small Bavarian company known to a broader set of music lovers and audiophiles. Nowadays the name Lindemann is always mentioned when specialists speak of digital playback in the highest

# Evolution, not revolution

category of quality.

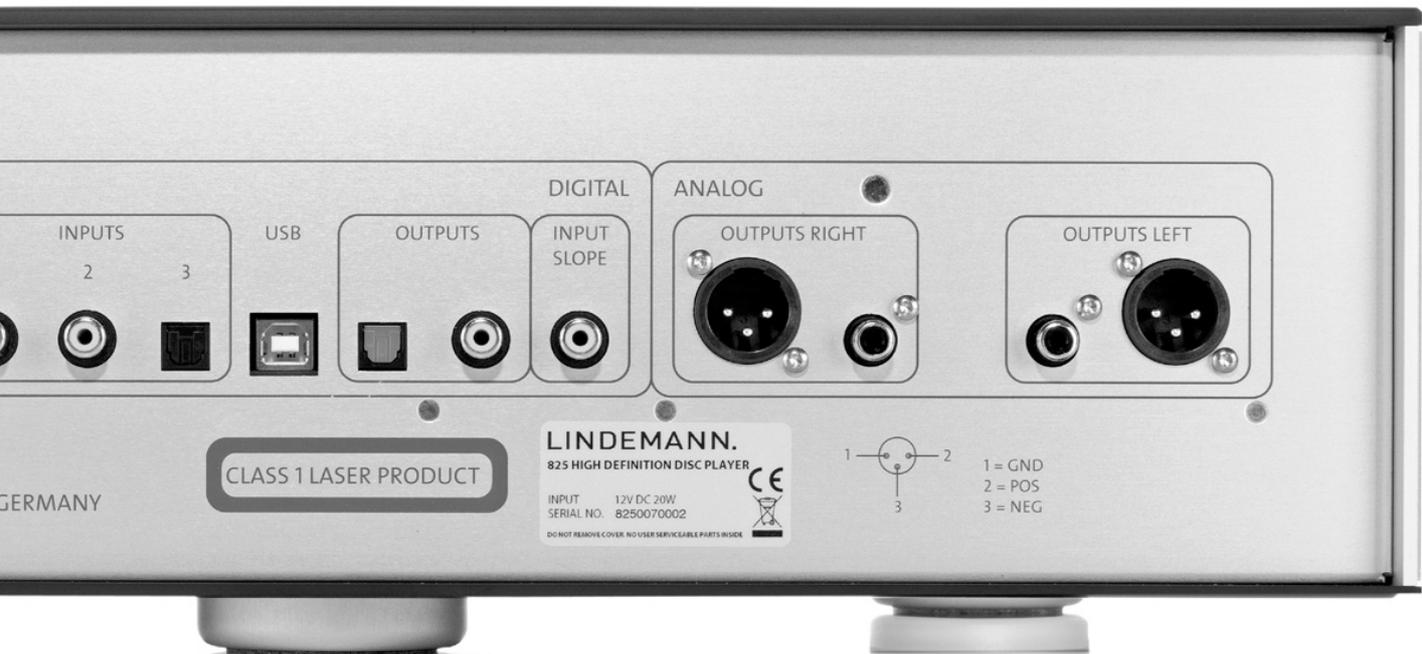
Enough preamble. Over the last decade, much progress has been made in digital music playback. The Super Audio CD (SACD) has been eking out a niche existence, only being sustained by the new releases in the classical music sector published by a few enterprising classical music labels. The system developers Philips and Sony have long since ceased to provide any real support for the format, yet alone the small manufacturers which have remained faithful to the system. And Lindemann Audiotechnik is also being confronted with the question of the "quo vadis" for their own brand of digital music players. Lindemann has provided an impressive response to this question with the new 825, so much I can already reveal; bringing us to the crux of this report.

The 825 is a CD player - and no longer an SACD player. Nevertheless, far from being a modest CD player, it is simultaneously a D/A converter which can breathe new auditory life into three other external digital sources. The external source equipment can be connected using two coax inputs and a TosLink fiber-optic input (all SPDIF). Furthermore - computer fans take note - the 825 also features a USB port, which can process USB data with a maximum definition of 24 bit/192 kHz. This report is not, however, devoted to the flexible, digital inputs. This is because the writer of these lines has a more than substantial collection of music, comprised of CDs, SACDs and records, at his disposal. To date, this has stifled any interest at all in downloading music or ripping CDs and then replaying music from a home server. I will simply have



to accept any accusations of conservatism directed at me, as well as the corresponding restrictions this entails in utilizing all the options which the 825 presents - and I do so with my head held high. You see, as a CD player the 825 is already a unique nonpareil which deserves to be appreciated worthily using its primary function. However, I will return to this later.

To start, a rundown of the technology in the device and the "trappings". Of course, trappings in this case refers to how the device comes across. This is the impression the purchaser gains when taking delivery of the device, allowing the object of audiophile longing to finally be unpacked at home. Exemplary and professional are the two key terms which I jotted down on my notepad. Along with absolutely stable packaging, I would like to accentuate the operating instructions at this point, the preparation of which most certainly involved substantial time and effort. The clear layout and comprehensibility of the operating instructions are exactly the way I envisage a manual. Lindemann has managed to put itself in the customer's shoes



**The Lindemann 825 is purely a CD player with a D/A converter unit which permits the connection of three more external signal sources.**

and formulated everything in a way which allows the proud owner to gain maximum enjoyment from their new purchase within a short space of time. And every manufacturer of high-quality HiFi equipment should, after all, be aware that it is people advancing in years who are particularly enthusiastic about our wonderful hobby. And this age group is not just comprised of computer and forum freaks who answer each others' questions on the internet. No-one else needs to be consulted to gain full audio enjoyment from a Lindemann 825. For this alone it earns highest points!

As far as the processing quality of the 825 is concerned, I could not detect any shortcomings at all. The tray mechanism with its metal tray performs its work gently and silently. All buttons and operating elements convey an impression of solidity and absolute durability. This makes it fun to use the 825. Nothing rattles or wobbles at all; tiptoeing on velvet paws might be the right expression. For the

asking price, an unreservedly fair quote. I particularly like the black-silver sobriety and elegance of the unit. Ostentation can be left to others who do it better - this is not a concern of the 825.

For the sake of integrity, we will now come to the special technical features. I get the impression that Norbert Lindemann has put everything which he has learnt over more than 20 years' of intensive work with digital technology into this new baby. Wolfson converters have been integrated into the 825, which, in itself, makes no statement at all. 24 bit, 32 bit, 96 kHz, 192 kHz, 384 kHz, DSD, up-sampling - all of no value when the overall concept is not harmonious. I still have an old Studer A 730 CD player which operates using a conventional 16-bit converter. Some of the modern "high-bit units" have already found the Studer's sound a hard nut to crack, believe me. This is why Norbert Lindemann's art of design is by no means exhausted with the choice of a respectable D/A converter. That is, for him, self-evident. In fact, by using a clever digital module first, he ensures that all incoming digital data undergo jitter cleaning. This

necessitates a high-precision master clock, which secures record-breaking values for the system clock in the 825. The menu allows the user to select the definition used to process the digital data once the 825 has eliminated the jitter. In AUTO mode, signals with a definition of less than 24 bit/96 kHz are boosted to this level. Higher data rates remain as they are. From my perspective, a practical feature, which I found the most convincing after trying out the other definitions available for selection.

And when it comes to the topic of digital filters, the 825 is a device which has been thoroughly thought through. Instead of relying on the filter function of the D/A converter, the 825 has been treated to a separate DSP (Digital Signal Processor) made by the Swiss specialists from Anagram Technologies which eliminates the "clinical digital" from digital recordings by means of this new processor module. I can already reveal that this goal was achieved by the 825, without being able to say for certain whether the DSP used can specifically account for that. After carrying out the D/A conversion and 6 dB filtering, the sensitive analog signal which has just been extracted makes its way, without the need for

the usual operational amplifiers, to the output sockets which, as customary at Lindemann, have been designed both symmetrically as well as asymmetrically. This is also the point to mention that the 825, as the case with its predecessor, is powered via a separate, tried-and-tested power supply unit. This ensures that the intricate, but also sensitive, clocking is not disrupted by the inevitable vibrations emanating from the power transformer.

By my standards, I have already shared far more technical details than usual with you. But in this case it seemed necessary, because the auditory gains, which become particularly evident in a comparison with the acoustics of the previous top model, the 820S, have to come from somewhere. In fact, a friend provided his 820S for an acoustic comparison, making it particularly easy to form a final assessment of the qualities featured by the successor to the throne of the Lindemann dynasty. And I can keep it short, dear reader: the 825 is the acoustically superior device in every regard. And superior does not, in this case, mean the usual clichés of "profound" bass and "crystalline" treble. The 825 dispenses with this sort of inadequate acoustic description early on. This is, in con-

Product:

CD-Player Lindemann 825

Manufacturer: Lindemann Audiotechnik GmbH

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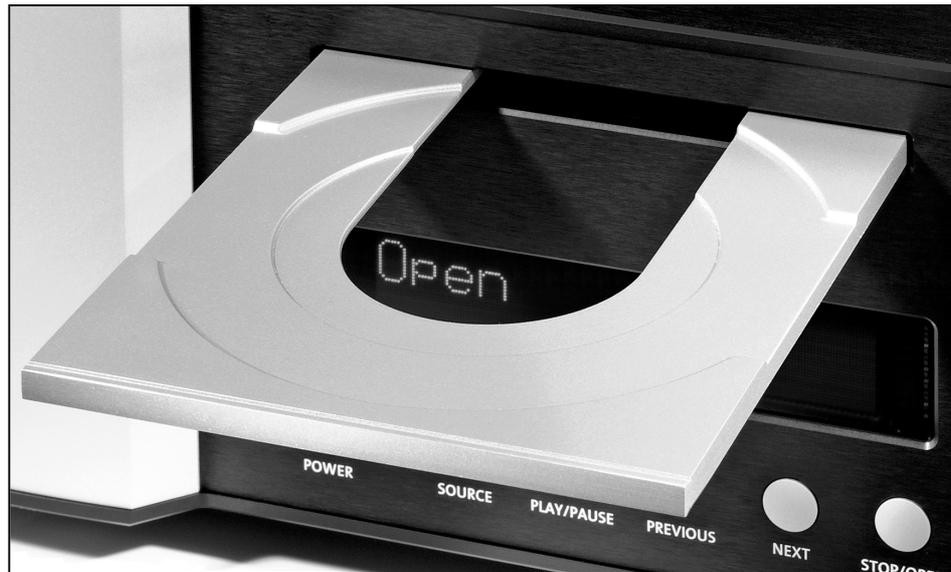
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**The tray is made of metal. It performs its work noiselessly when extending and retracting.**

trast, quite simply a matter of more music and less HiFi.

There is nothing artificial at all about player. It is a music machine par excellence, which allows its fortunate owner to immerse themselves even deeper in the music - to employ a watery metaphor. And interestingly, this is just as much the case with CDs as with hybrid SA-CDs. The SA-CD recordings which I used for my acoustic test sounded considerably poorer on the high-definition layer of the 820S than on the CD layer in the new 825, which due to its operating principle can only read the CD track of a hybrid disc. This was a new insight for me, and at the same time an important experience. Which is not to say that another SA-CD player cannot coax even a little more out of the SA-CD, in comparison. But I was rendered unable to conduct such a test due to the absence of an adequate counterpart for the 825. To do so, I would have needed an SA-CD player of the caliber of an Esoteric K-01, which I discussed in the last edition, and was unfortunately no longer at my disposal at the time of writing this article. Maybe I will be able to make up for this at a

later point in time.

After the exhaustive A/B comparison 820S/825 and the unequivocal victory of the 825, I quickly lost interest in more auditory comparisons. Because one disc after the other, regardless of whether CD or hybrid SA-CD, was drawn into the interior of the device via the gently sliding tray, filling heart and soul with delight. The 825's mode of playing can best be described by the word "touching", which gains an extraordinary significance when it comes to my favorite composer, J. S. Bach. LINN has just produced a grandiose recording of the Easter and Ascension Oratorio with the new Retrospect Ensemble under Matthew Hall (CKD 373). As new as the ensemble is, the musicians it is comprised of are not. Glancing in the booklet, names can be found which were once members of the English Baroque Soloists of John Eliot Gardiner. The Old Music Scene is, after all, one large family in England (and Scotland). The soloists on this recording, James Gilchrist (Tenor), Carolyn Sampson (Soprano) and Peter Harvey (Bass), count among THE Bach

vocalists of our day. When played on the 825, the two smaller oratorios penned by the master from Leipzig resound with an authenticity and naturalness which is seldom heard. Especially not in this price range.

chapeau!

MW

The Stradivari played by Arabella Steinbacher, as can be heard on her new recording of the three violin sonate by Johannes Brahms (Penta-Tone PTC 5186 367), features a melodiousness which was barely conceivable a few years ago when playing this music from a digital component. Erdo Groot, Polyhymnia's most experienced recording engineer, has once again realized what is currently possible in music recording. I could virtually speak of master tape quality in this case. Arabella Steinbacher and her congenial accompanist Robert Kulek are musically "one". It is plainly apparent that they work well as a team. And the 825 permits the listener to learn something about their invisible interaction, the fantastic timing and the "blind" understanding which distinguishes both musicians. That's it!

I could list even more examples of music; however this would only reiterate the same impression to you ad infinitum: this being that the new 825 is a splendid musical component, free of the digital anorexia of the years and decades past, and which simply lets the music flow without obstruction.

Are there any reasons which speak again purchasing this device? I only found one: should your music collection consist of single layer SA-CDs, DVD audios and Blu-ray (audio only) discs. The 825 cannot play them. Evolution trumps revolution à la Lindemann,